

NORTHEAST OREGON ALLIANCE

**PO Box 3197
La Grande, OR 97850
541-963-2399**

**105 E. Main Street
Enterprise, OR 97828
541-426-3598**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 6, 1996
TO: Potential Rural Investment Fund Applicants
FROM: Lisa Lang
RE: RIF Application Deadline and New Rural Action Plan

The Northeast Oregon Alliance's Rural Action Plan is under revision. The Northeast Oregon Alliance's plan was approved with conditions by the Oregon Economic Development Department. The Alliance is now working on revising the plan and expects to have the revised plan available for distribution by the end of May.

Due to the revision of the plan, the deadline for submission of Rural Investment Fund applications has been extended to July 1.

If you are planning to apply for a Rural Investment Fund grant, please call and we will send you a revised plan as soon as it is available. You may call us at either of the numbers listed on the letterhead or at 1-800-645-9454.

Thank you for your interest in this program.

Jan 86

Northeast Oregon Alliance Rural Action Plan

Background

The Rural Investment Fund was established by the 1995 Legislature and signed into law by Governor Kitzhaber. Administrative Rules for the fund were adopted on October 6, 1995. The Northeast Oregon Alliance region was awarded \$651,687 for projects, technical assistance and staffing.

According to the Administrative Rules, the Rural Investment Fund "is intended to provide a vehicle by which Regional Boards can leverage other funding sources to the maximum extent possible to improve the economies of rural areas."

The Northeast Oregon Alliance (NEO Alliance) Board was charged with the task of creating a rural action plan. The board developed this plan and adopted it on February 27, 1996. In March, the board held public hearings with the county governing bodies. All the county governing bodies adopted the plan.

The Northeast Oregon Alliance Board reviewed its membership and determined that the board members adequately represent the interests of rural areas within the region.

Input of Rural Areas

Existing strategic or community plans from Hermiston, Pendleton, Milton-Freewater, Union, Elgin, Union County, CAPECO, Region 12 and 13 Workforce Quality Committees, Port of Umatilla, Wallowa County, and Overall Economic Development Programs from the Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation and Northeast Oregon Economic Development District were reviewed to identify the needs and goals of the region. The needs and goals identified in these plans were reviewed by the board and discussed in the public input meetings.

The Northeast Oregon Alliance Board held nine community input sessions in Milton-Freewater, Hermiston, Pendleton, Elgin, Union, La Grande, Joseph, Wallowa, and Enterprise to gather input from the rural areas. County governing bodies, cities, special districts, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Workforce Quality Committee staff from Regions 12 and 13, county and city planning departments, chambers of commerce, development organizations, and community planning contacts were invited to these sessions. In addition, press releases inviting the public to attend and participate in these sessions were sent to newspapers and radio stations within the region. The majority of these meetings were well attended and regional board members attended meetings in their respective counties. The board also conducted a survey to determine the priority needs of the region.

All public input was reviewed by the board. Concerns that received priority consideration from the public include: infrastructure, medical facilities, grant writing and technical assistance, retention and expansion of existing business, tourism, creation of family wage jobs, construction and improvements to community centers and city halls, creation of new business and industry, affordable housing, workforce training/facilities, telecommunication, beautification and restoration of downtown areas and housing, senior housing and services, child and youth care, cottage industry and development of flex space, street improvements, community newspapers, recreation and parks, libraries, business grants, fire district, transportation, the Arts, natural resource planning and implementation, law enforcement, museums, Native American relations, rental housing, etc.

Rural Action Plan Mission

With the input of the rural areas and the information from the strategic plans, the Board developed the following mission statement: The Northeast Oregon Alliance's mission for the Rural Action Plan is to provide a flexible source of funding to help rural areas finance locally-determined economic and community development projects.

Rural Action Plan Objectives

In the interest of recruiting the widest variety of project applications, the Board determined not to limit projects to any specific category. Based on the public input received by the board, the objective of the Rural Action Plan is to fund projects which will lead to improvements in the following categories: (1) infrastructure and public benefit projects, (2) technical assistance, (3) business development, (4) housing, and (5) miscellaneous.

Project Solicitation Process

Projects will be solicited from businesses, the general public, cities, counties, special districts, Workforce Quality Committees, and Indian tribes. The funding opportunity will be advertised in the East Oregonian, The Observer, the Hermiston Herald, the Valley Times, the Elgin Recorder, and the Wallowa County Chieftain. Press releases will be delivered to radio stations and newspapers within the region. A notice of the application procedure will be sent to the direct mail list developed through the Regional Strategies process. The region will accept applications between April 1 and June 3, 1996.

Evaluation and Funding Process

The staff will review projects as they are received. All applicants who meet threshold criteria, as determined by staff, will be given the opportunity to be interviewed by the Board. The Board will make its initial selection of projects for funding by October 1, 1996. If all funds are not obligated at that time, or if projects do not progress as scheduled, the board will develop a procedure to commit all of the region's funds prior to May 31, 1997.

The Northeast Oregon Alliance Board will utilize the following list of criteria to make its funding decisions. All of these criteria were mandated by Administrative Rule, and the Board has decided not to specify additional criteria for project evaluation.

1. The priorities of Rural areas that have the greatest economic challenges;
2. Whether monies from the Rural Investment Fund will fill a gap in financing for programs and projects;
3. The extent to which monies from the Rural Investment Fund will leverage other resources by bringing in public or private partnerships;
4. The degree to which applicants for funding have established measurable economic outcomes that can demonstrate, through specific Performance Measurements, progress towards achievement of the goals and objectives of the Rural Investment Fund.

The Northeast Oregon Alliance will not fund projects that include activities in the following list as they are prohibited by Administrative Rule:

1. Retirement of any debt;
2. Payments for expenses incurred prior to approval of the Northeast Oregon Alliance's Rural Action Plan by the State of Oregon;
3. Payments for, or substitutions of, local government expenditures for Existing or Continuing Public Services;
4. Relocation of a facility from one labor market within the State to another, if not accompanied by an expansion of the applicant's business or employment.

Performance Measurement

The Board will set performance measures for each project on an individualized basis in cooperation with the project proponent. In some cases these performance measurements may include the enhancement of an existing public facility, in other cases the performance measurement may be an increase in grant requests written for a jurisdiction or project, completion of construction or feasibility study, or leverage of funds. Establishment of performance measurements will be on-going.

Staff

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District, current staff for the region's board, will administer the Rural Action Plan and oversee financial operations of the region's Rural Investment Fund. The region's board has approved a budget of \$65,000 for the biennium. NEOEDD will provide the following services for the regional board: overall plan administration, public outreach, project solicitation, board support, meeting preparation and minutes, contract development/monitoring/administration, fiscal management, project troubleshooting, community assistance, and preparation of periodic reports regarding the use of Rural Investment Funds.